



## TESTIMONY

In Support of

### **LD 74: Resolve, To Ensure Appropriate Personal Needs Allowances for Persons Residing in Long-term Care Facilities**

February 11, 2021

### **Brenda Gallant Maine Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Brenda Gallant. I am the Long-Term Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman Program is a state-wide non-profit organization that provides advocacy for elders and adults with disabilities who receive long-term services and supports throughout the state. We serve residents in nursing homes, residential care, assisted living facilities, adult day programs and recipients of home care services. Additionally, we serve patients in hospitals who experience barriers in accessing long-term care services when they are ready for discharge.

I am pleased to provide testimony in support of this legislation that requires amendment of the rules for the MaineCare program to provide an increase in the personal needs allowance for residents in nursing homes from \$40.00/month to \$70.00 /month and for residents in residential care facilities from \$70.00/month to \$100.00/month.

The personal needs allowance (PNA) is the monthly amount of money that residents who receive MaineCare may retain from their personal income. Any income above the allowance is applied toward the cost of their care. The PNA is provided so that residents will have funds to pay for expenses such as magazines, cards, a meal out with friends/family, haircuts, hobbies, clothing, telephone, cable television, etc. Items such as toothpaste, tissues, shampoo, and incontinence products are paid for by MaineCare. Federal regulations prohibit nursing homes from charging residents' PNA for items that are provided for by MaineCare payments while state regulations provide the same protection for residents of residential care facilities.

Maine's personal needs allowances have not been raised in many years. The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured issued a report titled Medicaid Financial Eligibility for Seniors and People with Disabilities in 2015 which shows that Maine's nursing home PNA of \$40 is the

lowest in New England. Currently the other New England States provide the following amounts: CT \$60, MA \$73, NH \$70, RI \$50, VT \$48.

The adequacy of the PNA is important to the quality of life of residents in both nursing homes and residential care facilities allowing them the ability to meet some very basic needs that are not provided for by MaineCare.

Thank you for your consideration.